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ABSTRACT

Over the past few years there has been a growing interest in family involvement, family intervention, and family counseling by professionals. This interest is underscored by an ever increasing need for parent and family involvement in the education of children. Schools have responded to the need for parental and family involvement with specific populations of students but apparently have not responded for the total student population. Today schools are faced with growing problems of inadequate parental involvement, changing family structures, and multifaceted communities. Family counseling which includes effective parent and family involvement is the necessary next step in the professional development of teachers, counselors, and administrators. As an aid to professional development, current problems and issues facing modern families are reviewed in this document. Four areas basic to understanding families are discussed including the various types of families, the politics of families, the family as a social system, and the variety of non-traditional families. Four approaches to family therapy appropriate for use in schools are discussed with examples of each therapy's approach to a sample problem: a student's drinking violation. These approaches include Family Systems Approach, Family of Origin Therapy, Humanistic Family Counseling, and Behavioral Family Therapy. In the conclusion, the need for improved utilization and involvement of families in children's education is reaffirmed. (ABL)

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FAMILY COUNSELING STRATEGIES IN THE SCHOOLS

by Robert C. Ford, Ph.D.

Over the past few years there has been a growing interest in family involvement, family intervention and family counseling by professionals in both public and private sectors. This interest is underscored by an ever increasing need for parent and family involvement in the personal growth and development of the nation's children in all aspects of their lives. Specifically, in the area of public education this need for improvement of parental and family involvement in the education of children is long overdue.

A local group of public school counselors brought this issue to the attention of the public by inaugurating academic year 1983-84 as the "Year of the family".[1] They used this occasion to dedicate their programs of counselor development and training to improving their professional expertise for working with families in schools and in private contexts. In the course of this year-long exposure to issues of family life and family involvement, they found that needs went deeper than a surface appearance of more family counseling, but touched upon a more compelling need for an increase in parent involvement in the schools coupled with an improvement in the schools' ability to utilize parents more effectively in the educational careers of their children. As one parent, a working mother of several school-aged children commented, "We parents are called patrons of the public school system. That's a good term alright, because most of the time we feel patronized by officials in the school system."[2]

Research indicates that some schools have responded to the need for parental and family involvement with specific populations of students (ie, gifted, special, exceptional); however, there appears to be a lack of response by schools to the general need for parental involvement with the total school population. Washington's Student Discipline Reference Guide outlined extensive use of parent involvement with parents of handicapped students through parent contacts, phone calls, conferences, etc. These were used as documentation on the progress or problems of handicapped or "special education" students. While this Guide pointed out the importance of parent involvement with ethnic minority students, it was candid in it's statement that it was usually after a situation had worsened and the schools had reached their limit with certain difficult students that families and parents of "culturally different" students were notified.[3] These claims help to establish a local basis for the need of improved parent involvement in the education of their children.

Nationally, research on families in America reinforces the need to understand changes in family structure. It implies that there is no longer such a thing as a typical American family. The so-called traditional family composed of biological parents, a working father and mother with school-aged children make-up less than 15% of all American households. Families composed of biological parents, a working father with mother at home and school-aged children make-up only 7% of all households. Of all the marriages in the United States, 50% end-up in divorce while four-out-of-five of those divorcees (many with school-aged children) remarry and reconstitute new families.

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These are called step-families and they comprise up to 40% of all households. There are nearly 15 million school-aged children in stepfamily households, while 10 million children come from singleparent households. Together, this is almost 60% of all American households.[4] These statistics suggest that educators need to have a basic understanding of changes in the character of the American family in order to be effective helpers and to avoid serious misperceptions, misunderstanding and misjudgments about parents and their children.

This growing need for parental and family involvement is not just a local one. It extends to our national borders, even internationally as other countries attempt to cope with the complexities of a multifaceted milieu for public education. The Council of Europe defined the link between family environment and school in its, "Priorities in Pre-School Education", by affirming the importance of school staff to educate parents and give them information about school. However, the Council admonished, the staff must also get to know the parents and families and secure information from them. This information should encompass the cultural situation, the attitudes, the educational objectives and the parent's methods of upbringing their children. The report concluded that it was important to consider each child as an individual, and, at the same time as a member of a family and of a group and to treat each child as such.[5]

Today then, as we are faced with growing problems of inadequate parental involvement, changing family structures and multifaceted communities, a question may be asked, "Are educators effective in utilizing and facilitating meaningful family involvement in the education of children?" The answer, of course, lies in the heart of each school district and each school building. The professional educator knows his response to this query, while at the same time that educator would probably anticipate that the average parent's response would be negative. We agree with those parents who experience a lack of adequate and meaningful involvement in the educational careers of their children. Findings from courses taught in multicultural education, student discipline, and family counseling indicate a dearth of information about families in general, and about how to intervene with problem families or families in crisis. Our findings support those parents who feel patronized by school officials, as well as those minority parents who feel left-out of the system until its too late. It is our view that the family counseling issue, which includes effective parent and family involvement, is the necessary next-step in the professional development of teachers, counselors and administrators.

It is the expressed purpose of this paper to aid in this professional development by reviewing current problems and issues facing modern families. In addition, it will review selected approaches designed for effective intervention in family problems. With respect to parent and family involvement in the education of children, specific recommendations will be made in the following areas:

1. How can educators respond more effectively to the need for increased and improved parental/family involvement?

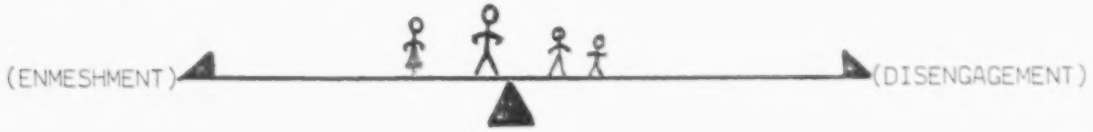
2. How can educators better utilize local resources to aid families in crisis?

3. How can educators be helpful with single and step-parent families, dual-career families, families of special-education and gifted children, and ethnic-minority families.

FAMILY THEORY

There are four areas of family theory which are important to a basic understanding of the family as it exists today. They are: a) the various types of families, b) the politics of families, c) the family as a social system, and d) the variety of non-traditional families.

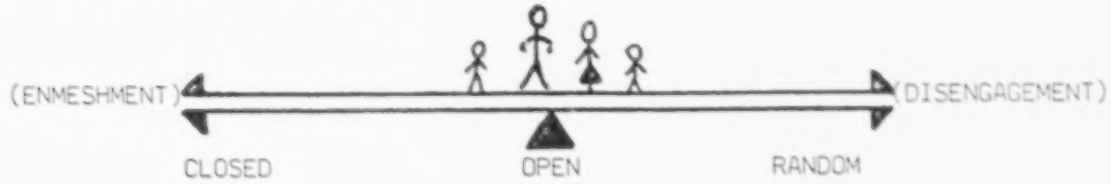
Families have personalities. Family personalities, or types, are descriptions of a family's way of living. There are numerous models which may be used to describe a family, but two sets of descriptions seem to be the most popular. The first describes the family on the basis of its interactive patterns. For example, there are families whose interactions are disengaged from one another and there seems to be a relative absence of strong connection between family members. In these families relationship ties between family members are weak or non-existent. Then there is the opposite pattern of interaction, those families who are enmeshed with one another and there is a tight interlocking of members. In these families relationship ties are too tight and too strong causing family members to be overconcerned and overinvolved in each other's lives.[6] These opposing descriptions may be illustrated on the following continuum:



(Fig. 1)

An example of these two extremes of family interaction and its effect on a school-aged child would be as follows: If you were an elementary teacher who was making home visits to an enmeshed family, as you entered the home and greeted your student's parent, an enmeshed mother (or father) might respond, "I've had a terrible day. Johnny rushed out of here late for school this morning and missed his breakfast. How could he hurt me like that. I've been a nervous wreck worrying about him all day." This would be a typical response in an enmeshed family. Every action of a family member directly and automatically effects every other family member. This type of family togetherness represents extreme attachment between family members. On the other hand, if you were that same teacher making a scheduled home visit to a disengaged family, whose child (your student) had skipped breakfast that morning, as you entered the home and greeted the parent, a disengaged mother (or father) would respond, "Oh, come in and have a seat ... try to find a place to sit where you can. Just move those dishes over on the table... Oh, it looks like someone didn't eat breakfast this morning." This would be a typical response in a disengaged family. These family members are too detached from one another and represent extreme separateness. Here there is too much "I-ness". In the enmeshed there was too much togetherness or "WE-ness". It is suggested that healthy family interactions represent a balance between these two extremes.

The second model describes families according to their composition and structure. These are families which may be described as closed, open and random. In closed family structures, the rules, regulations and power hierarchies are rigid. These families are run like a "tight ship". Doors are all locked, television programs are screened, comings and going are scrupulously reported, outsiders are viewed suspiciously and privacy is kept at a premium. These families exhibit stability as a tradition, in contrast to open type families which foster flexibility and adaptability. Open families claim to be neither too tightly nor too loosely bonded. Viewed as democratic, this type of family structure contains a sense of order, while flexibility and negotiation of rules, regulations and tradition is accepted. The rights of individual members within the family is taken for granted simultaneously with loyalty to the family as a whole. This description of family style is compared to the random type of family which is a "Do your own thing" family pattern. In random families, individuality is maximized to the extreme where each person does what he or she wants, regardless of if it is related or connected to what others in the family are doing. There are few, if any, rules. Connecting links between members are loose, outsiders are included and come and go as regular family members, schedules and mealtimes are random and irregular at best, but as a whole left up to the individual person.[7] These three descriptions may be illustrated upon the previous continuum in the following way:

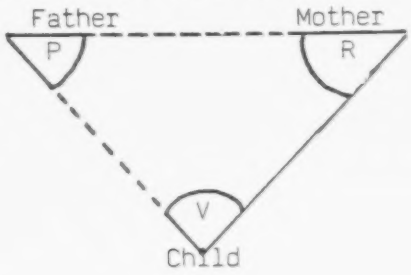


(FIG. 2)

Families are political. This is the second area of family theory. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of power alliances and coalitions within families.[8] Regardless if it is clearly perceived or not by outsiders, families are political and every member of a family, including the school-aged child, is deeply affected by political innerworkings and power-plays of the family.

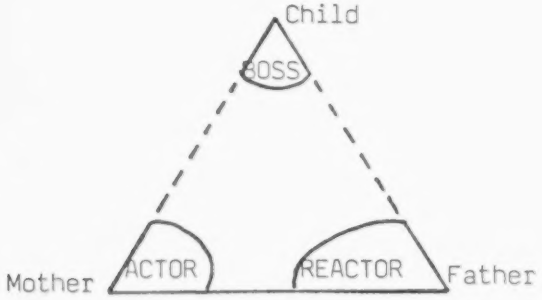
The most powerful coalition or power-alliance in a family is the triangle. What is a human triangle? Contrary to popular belief a triangle is not three persons but two against one.[9] Triangles exist when there is a close tie between two family members to the exclusion of a third. Family theory describes a variety of triangles in the literature. Some are healthy and many are harmful and unhealthy. One of the unhealthy forms is a coalition between a parent and a school-aged child against a second parent. This coalition is improper because it sets-up an alliance between a superior and a subordinate. This represents a violation of legitimate boundaries coupled with a hostile exclusion of another superior (parent). How might this coalition affect the child? Consider the following illustration of a typical persecutor, victim, rescuer triangle. Traditionally, the father is the persecutor, the mother is the rescuer and the child is the victim. In this particular triangle-game, called "Let's You and Him Fight"[10], the father initiates by being overly critical or punitive to the child, causing the mother to come to the rescue of

the child. This instigates an argument or fight between father and mother, which escalates until the victim child resolves the conflict with "You leave my mommy alone...", at which time the father retreats in hostility and shame to prepare to play the game again in the future. A coalition is thus affected between mother and child which excludes the father, or any other father-figure (eg, classroom teacher), who is perceived as threatening the alliance. This triangle may be illustrated as follows:



(FIG. 3)

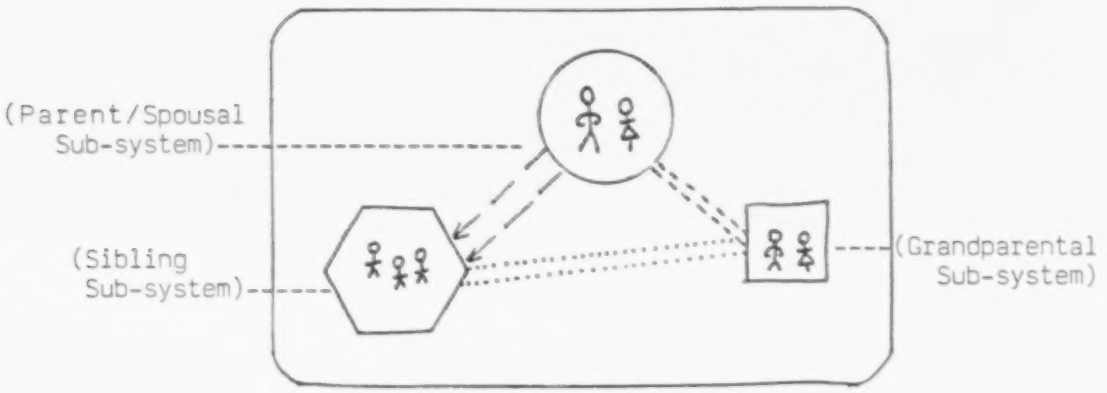
Also, there is the example of a parent-parent coalition which excludes the child from the union. A brief description of this alliance may be used to illustrate a different type of triangle. A videotaped casestudy, called "The Boss", was an example of a mother + father alliance against a hyperactive nine-year-old who was being used as the family's scapegoat.[11] Because the mother and father had perceived themselves as failures in disciplining their son, they joined against him by identifying him as an impossible problem-child, thus making him a scapegoat for the entire family, and incidentally, for any marital problems that they had as a couple. At school, even though the child had a reputation of being bad, his discipline was normal to that of other children in his age group. This triangle may be illustrated as follows:



(FIG. 4)

The third area of family theory is paradigmatic. As a recent extension of the existing theory, the view suggests that families operate as social systems. What is a social system? A system is a set of related objects while its counterpart, a social system, is a set of human beings in various degrees of relationship with one another (eg, enmeshed to disengaged). The concept of the family as a social system was taken from General Systems Theory in Biology.[12] This theory postulated that no one lived in isolation. Each person was as much a product of his environment as of his own individual

attributes. The key to this social systems concept was the interdependence of various members of the system. For example, a family system is composed of various sub-systems which are mutually related and dependent on one another. There is the spousal sub-system, the sibling subsystem, and there may even be a grandparental sub-system. While each sub-system is apparently autonomous, in reality each is mutually interdependent on each other and the system as a whole. This may be illustrated as follows:



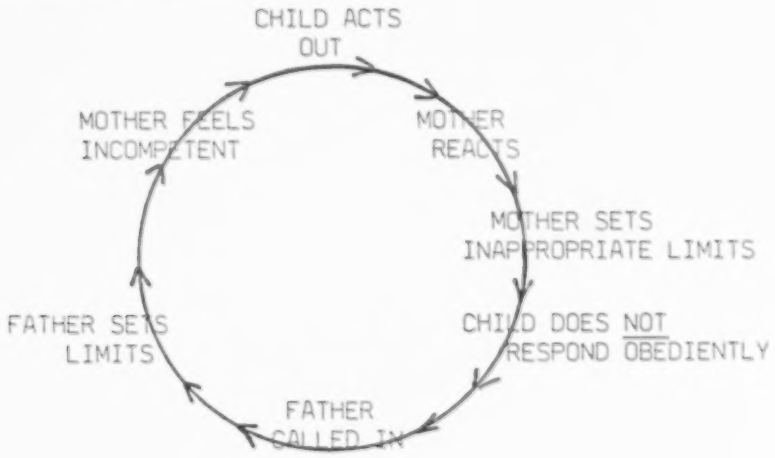
(FIG. 5)

It has been stated that a change in one part of a system will effect a change in all other parts of the system. Concommitantly, in order to understand one part of a system one must understand that part in relation to the other parts. Therefore, to effect a child's behavior systemically, an educator must be involved at many levels of the child's social system: the child directly, the child-teacher relationship, the child-peer relationships, the child-family relationship, etc. All of these levels represent the child's total system.

This new view suggests that to be effective in aiding a child towards constructive change, teachers, counselors and administrators need to think systems when intervening with the child. Fortunately, it does not require that each time the child is dealt with the entire family or social system must be present. On the contrary, one may see the child separately or with parents, siblings or peers. Conferences may or may not include other school professionals (ie, teachers, counselors, or administrators). Various combinations may be used as is appropriate and convenient. What is required in this new concept is to maintain the systems perspective on the problem rather than viewing it from an isolated problem-child viewpoint. For an illustration of the systems viewpoint, take the example of a school counselor working closely with a child on tardy homework assignments. Involving parents and classroom teacher, a mutual contract was drawn-up stipulating homework responsibilities as well as sign-off responsibilities for each party involved. If any of the three were not in complete agreement, the plan was useless. Even if the classroom teacher was readily involved, the counselor (or any other initiator) had to involve the child's parents in an active way for the plan to be effective.[13]

Especially when working with chronic problems in school-aged children, the problem is the responsibility of the entire family rather than one isolated individual. In order to solve the problem (eg, acting-out behaviors), educators must help the family to perceive it in a systemic way. First of all, the family must be viewed as a system, a set of interrelated persons effecting each other

in reciprocal and reinforcing ways. This pattern of reciprocal reaction has been conceptualized as a circular chain with continually reinforcing actions and reactions. In the case of an acting-out child whose mother is tentative and inconsistent in discipline and whose father is reluctant to step-in and set appropriate limits, we may observe a chain reaction which results in chronic misbehavior. As an all too common pattern, the child's mother inevitably feels discouraged at her hesitancy and decides to react firmer. At the next acting-out episode, the mother typically overreacts and the child balks and rejects her harsh limits. At this time she retreats and frustratedly calls in reinforcements, the father. He reluctantly sets more limits to control the child. This has been diagrammed as follows:



(FIG. 6)

While the father feels as though he has been of help to the situation, he has really reinforced the problem in the following ways:

1. He has reinforced his spouse' inadequacy in the discipline of their child;
2. He has reinforced the child's rejection of his mother's authority;
3. He has reinforced the child's perception that only father is to be obeyed;
4. He has given the child permission to continue to disobey until father steps in.

This is what is meant by a chronic reaction syndrome. It is repetitive in its circular pattern of action-reaction-reinforcements.

There are certain advantages and disadvantages to a family's operation as a system. Some of the advantages are that families are viewed as being stuck rather than sick. This allows the educator more latitude for change through breaking the stuckness rather than the arduous task of healing a sick child. Secondly, an individual problem is viewed as a collective difficulty. This allows for all of the family's resources and combined efforts to be turned upon it thus making it more solvable than the lonely job of resolving one's personal problems. Lastly, in every family situation there are isolated, disenfranchised, abandoned persons with difficulties. These hard-to-reach individuals or family members through the systemic outlook are once again reachable because there may be someone in the near or extended family who can get to that person.

The systems viewpoint utilizes these contacts to free-up a system in some cases or to pull it together in others.[15]

There are numerous disadvantages in the operations of a family as a system. First of all, highly enmeshed family systems suffer from attachment, a clinging to one another without appropriate differentiation. This leads to overidentification, the guilt-resentment syndrome, and an overall limiting of personal freedom and autonomy. Secondly, enmeshed family systems fall prey to what is known as the family projection process where the problems of the family are transmitted to one scapegoated member, usually a school-aged child of a family system.[16]

Lastly, family systems are vulnerable to secrecy and protection in order to maintain homeostasis. Like all systems, families thrive and depend upon a perception of balance and order in their operations. Therefore, when one family member has difficulty all other members will make adjustments around this imbalance. This coping is a trait more common to enmeshed families than either direct confrontation or encounter. When educators intervene with these families, it feels as though they are hitting a brick wall of resistance, protection and secrecy. Because of the need for homeostasis, educators may assume that coping measures have already been applied in various degrees. Then the issue becomes how much is the family capable of necessary readjustments when changes and corrections are made. It has been known that some family systems become so rigid that members will resist needed changes or hinder necessary ones in order to preserve its homeostasis.

NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

Research indicates that there is a rapidly growing variety of so-called non-traditional families. The ratio of traditional to non-traditional families is changing so rapidly that former traditional families have dwindled to the point where they are virtually non-existent. We are currently witnessing a reversal in the traditional norms of the American family. To wit: Only 7% of all American families are composed of biological parents and school-aged children where the father works and mother is at home. Only 15% of all families are those where father and mother work, both are biological parents of their children who are attending school.[17]

On the other hand, there are six million single-parent households containing 10 million children. These single-parent families which make-up 20% of all American households constitute the second largest group of non-traditional families. Problems for single-parents seem to fall into <u>two</u> broad areas: a) divorce impact, and b) lifestyle reconstruction. These problems occur in three phases: time of separation, the first two years, and finally the long-term of readjustment to the new lifestyle.[18]

Necessarily, there is a division in helping single-parents for it would be inappropriate for school personnel to be directly involved in the intimate affairs of a newly divorced parent. However, it would be appropriate for the educator to be knowledgeable and sensitive in this highly emotional period and be able to assist the parent with appropriate referrals to local counseling resources, divorce groups, or single-parent support organizations.

In brief, the symptoms inherent in men and women following divorce are different. For example, for many women the adjustment crisis is that of identity. Who am I? Especially, who am I now that I'm no longer Mrs. _____? This is often accompanied by feelings of estrangement and abandonment by friends and family. Supportive relationships are vital in this phase. A second issue for many women is survival. How do I make it with my children? Especially now that I've discontinued college, or, haven't worked for ___ years? This is often accompanied by feelings of panic, fear, regret, bewilderment and being overwhelmed. In addition to support, information and available resources are needed at this time for newly divorced mothers.

Newly divorced men, on the other hand, are vulnerable to depression at being overwhelmed by the enormity of household tasks. Rather than pondering Who am I?, they seem to wonder what to do? How can I possibly do all of this, raise my kids, keep-up the house, do my job? Support is necessary here too, but it is support in homemaking as well as providing for the family.[19] Referrals to support groups, men's groups, etc. would be helpful in these situations.

It would be appropriate for educators to be more directly involved in lifestyle reconstruction for single-parent households especially with regards to school-aged children. It has been stated that hidden in the cry of helping their child get a good education is the single-parent's pain of transition, loss inherent in the divorce process and concerns about public stereotypes.[20] As a result of these concerns, Parent-Teacher Organizations, Community Self-Help Groups and Mental Health Co-Ops nationwide have evolved to help single-parents in their short-term and long-range lifestyle readjustment struggles. Educators can be helpful in this area by their involvement in these groups. Then they are able to educate single-parents in the process of change and transition. The following table is an outline for HELPING which has been used to provide single-parents with a structure to organize their lives toward readjustment.[21]

"HELPING Single-Parent Families"

Help	---- Physical well being: sleep, exercise, nutrition
Emotions	---- Stress Management, Relaxation Training
Learning	---- Legal Information, Employment Information, Child-Care
Personal	---- Quality Time with Children, Support network, Quiet Times
Image-Making	---- Self-Esteem Work, Personal Interest, Fun Planning
Need to Know	---- Problem-Solving Skills, Decision-Making, Rational Self-Talk
Guidance	---- Family Management Skills, Child Discipline Techniques

(FIG. 7)

This organized system need not be facilitated by the educator, but merely given as information to the single-parent as a start on what to do, where to go, who to see to get their lives together again.

From the tales of "Cinderella" or "Hansel and Gretel", our culture has been programmed to be suspicious and not very supportive of stepfamilies. With

more than 15 million children living in stepfamily households, they constitute the largest group of our non-traditional families in America today. Since one-half of today's marriages end in divorce and four-of-five of those divorcees with school-aged children remarry and reconstitute families, the need to understand the nature and problems of stepfamily households is apparent.[22]

There are three common mistakes that professional helpers as well as the general public make in understanding stepfamilies: 1) perceiving them as biologically nuclear households, 2) insensitivity to the critical first-year of transition, 3) ignorance of the stress peculiar to blending families. It was found that when a teacher, counselor or administrator advised a stepparent to "Go home and act like a mother" to her disobedient stepdaughter, this advice caused more of a problem than a solution. The educator ignored the fact that the adult was not the child's mother, in the biological sense of the term. As such, she may have been viewed as an outsider in the family's internal system. Particularly in adolescent age groups, it was found that adult-to-children relationships were tested and stretched by rebellion and deviance. This is often exaggerated in the stepfamily household because of the biological distance between stepparent and stepchild.

Discipline and loyalty were reported as resultant problems in stepfamily households.[23] Professional counselors found that respecting reality and honoring distance was the safe and sure way to proceed during a stepfamily's transition period. The rule was to keep changes to a minimum by letting the biological parent continue in his/her normal disciplinary pattern throughout the first year. This requires the stepparent to take a backseat in stepchild discipline. Stepparents were reminded that although they loved and respected each another, the assumption that their children felt the same way may be false. They were admonished to take the slow road in building a positive, cooperative relationship between stepparent and stepchild particularly in the area of discipline. Therefore, in the example above it would have been more suitable for the educator to counsel that stepparent, "Go home and talk to your spouse privately about the child. Come to an agreement about what is the best way to confront the child's behavior. Be sure to get agreement as to who says what to whom."

Of equal concern in stepfamilies is the problem of loyalties between children and stepparents as opposed to biological parents. This problem is an extremely complex one for it touches upon the emotional as well as the mental capacities of the child. Findings show that those stepchildren whose biological parents were elsewhere experienced what is known as a double-bind. They feel that if they develop positive and loving feelings toward their stepparents, then they are being disloyal to their biological parent. Due to age group and development, stepchildren possess a lesser ability to understand that affinities toward one parent will not automatically reduce affinities toward another. This is a complex mental struggle for most children and it is the rare child who can see that there is enough love to go to both sets of parents. Most stepchildren fall prey to a double-bind in love-loyalties.[24] With respect to both biological and stepparents, "They are damned if they do (love either), and damned if they don't (love either one)."

When there are negative feelings between biological parents, the child is caught in a quandry, "How can I love my mom and dad equally without taking sides, when they hate (or don't love) each other?" Because most children see themselves as a composite product of mom and dad, they have great difficulty in maintaining a sense of wholeness when their progenitors are negatively separated. Findings show that these children take the spouses' negativity

personally. As children, they are not able to understand the complexity of a spousal relationship separate from a parental relationship. Therefore, they often react with depression, rage, acting-out behaviors, etc.

This is a place where educators can be helpful to both stepparents and stepchildren. First, a compassionate understanding of these issues as natural problems of a stepfamily is important instead of a critical or prejudicial judgment. Then the educator can provide comfort to the concerns of a worried stepparent. Secondly, with the children teachers and counselors can give the child permission to love both parents and stepparents without feeling disloyal to either. By reinforcing the concept of the goodness of love children can be taught that loving someone near and dear does not and will not hurt or harm another loved one.

Only 7% of American families are composed of biological parents and children where the father works, the mother is at home and children are in school. Since mid-century, the number of employed women in families has doubled so that today 15% of American nuclear families are composed of working fathers and working mothers. These are called dual-career families and of this group, 55% have school-aged children. As inflation rates and economic pressures continue to rise, more and more couples will enter dual-employment and dual-career status.[25] When there are school-aged children involved, this change makes an impact upon the children and upon their teachers, counselors and administrators.

Problems which befall these families occur in three areas: a) care of the home, b) care of the child, and c) access by the schools. Of these three, only the issues of child-care and school access seem to be appropriate for school intervention. This is not to say that issues of spousal attitudes regarding equity in home-care, food preparation, role expectations and mutual cooperation are not important. But they seem to be problems which would more properly be dealt with through private counseling sources.

In the area of child-care however, educators can be of assistance to working mothers and fathers. One of the ways to be helpful is by understanding effects of public prejudice on the issue of continuous care. This is the idea that there is an absolute need for constancy in caring for young children because of their inability to handle separation from the parent without being overwhelmed by anxiety. This is an old theory evolving out of turn-of-the-century views which has negatively effected public opinion towards working parents.[26] More recent findings postulate that if working parents do not reject or neglect children, employment has neither a good nor bad effect on them. Similarly, if parents truly enjoy their work, school-aged children are more positive toward them than are children toward unemployed parents.[27] Teachers, counselors and administrators can advise working mothers and fathers of these findings.

With respect to doubting, overworked and overburdened parents, findings indicate that the mother or father who enjoyed work but felt guilty toward their child tended to overprotect the child and overcompensated for absence. Good intentions notwithstanding, this often smothers the child and deprives him of independence and needs to solve his own problems. The child feels pressured and resentful while mother and father feel rejected, guilty and then resent the child's resentment. Feeling overburdened and inadequate, the working parent complains, "I don't know what to do. I try to do all that

I can, and it still is not enough. What more do they want from me?" These are the cries of SUPERMOM or SUPERDAD. These parents can be helped either by guidance from a concerned educator or referral to private counseling. Either way would be helpful.

Secondly, educators need to be of direct assistance in the area of parental access by schools. This has been an area of complaint by school officials who say, "When I need to contact that (working) parent, they are no where to be found. Either the kids don't know where they are, or if they do, they can't be reached at work. And when I do reach them, it's too late to do anything."[28] On the other side of the coin, working parents voice their complaint, "When I'm called into the schools, it's always when something bad has happened to my child. Mostly, it's only after the situation has worsened and the school has taken that final step. Then, it's too late! I want to cooperate. I'll help them with my kid, but they've got to help me. I think it's their job to let me know in time to help my child if he gets in trouble."[28]

The rule of thumb is "Contact them before you need them" by any means necessary. Teachers have written letters to parents with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope, have made home visits, office visits and plant visits. These will go a long way. For those who remain inaccessible, consistent effort, group planning and individual patience are the only avenues left for solving this problem.

For the most part, ethnic minority parents are neglected by schools unless they are school personnel themselves or occupy some professional status in the community. They need to be utilized as valuable resources to the schools for two reasons: a) minority parents and families represent a rich source of cultural diversity to a school system which is dominated by a White, middle-class, male perspective, and b) minority parents represent an avenue of access into the lifestyle and culture of ethnic minority students.[30]

Most minority parents, and Black parents in particular, believe that schools contact them only when their youngsters are in trouble and then usually when its too late to be of any meaningful assistance to the school or the child. This is evidenced by the disproportionate rate of suspension of minority youngsters in our schools locally, statewide and across the nation. Statistics reveal that ethnic minority students in general, and Black youngsters in particular, are suspended from school at a ratio of two-to-ten times as much as their White peers. These statistics reveal that there is a positive correlation between high rates of disproportionate suspension and the number of minority students in schools.

For example, in those schools where Black student enrollments exceeded 25% of the total student population, the disproportionate rate of suspension from class was as low as less than two-to-one. On the other hand, at those schools where Black student enrollment was less than 10% of the total population, the rate of disproportionate suspension rose to a ten-to-one ratio of suspensions from class.[31] If one can assume an equal rate of parental involvement in those situations of high and low student enrollment, then one can say with leverage: the greater the parental involvement, the less disproportionality; the less parental involvement, the greater the rate of disproportionality.

Teachers, counselors and administrators may anticipate three major issues when involving minority parents and families in the school community: a) the nature of difference, b) the role of color, and c) the result of offensive mechanisms.[32] Although difference does not mean deficit, difference does mean difficulty to most ethnic minority students in our schools.[33]

Black, Spanish-speaking and visibly different students anticipate that they will have negative experiences with unaware educators in the school system. Parents and families of different students reflect the same concerns of their children and in many cases armor themselves against a system that has a history of either neglect or negative attention to difference.

Because some educators attempt to compensate for negative difference by pretending as though there is no difference, a second mistake is made when educators say, "I don't see your color. I don't see color. I don't see you as a Black person. You're just an individual to me." Good intentions notwithstanding, these perceptions fail to impress the minority parent positively because to them, "Color is important in America".[34] In many cases, color equals culture to ethnic minority people. So that when one says, "I don't see your color, because color is not important to me", then that person is unintentionally saying, "I don't recognize your culture, because your history, your struggles, your values are not important to me". And this is flatly unacceptable to ethnic minority families and their school-aged children, today!

Virtually all minority families, and Black families in particular, know that color has been uniquely important in the evolution of the American way of life. Heretofore, color has transcended individuality while weaving the very fabric of American history and culture in a negative way. Now, in order to build positive self-concept as well as group concept, color sensitivity and cultural appreciation play important and positive roles in ethnic minority families.

Finally, the issue of offensive mechanisms include those conscious/unconscious tendencies of educators to overcompensate with culturally different students and their families. In an attempt to be fair or to be kind, teachers, counselors and administrators invariably do too much in their relationships with minority students and families. At best, this overcompensation is viewed by the minority parent or student as a subtle form of paternalism; at worst, it is viewed as an offensive mechanism which belittles the parent or child. An example given is that of a field trip to the museum where the teacher identified certain minority students to be monitored closely. Although the teacher's intention was to protect the children and to watch them closely, the child's perception of being singled-out resulted in feelings of embarrassment and discomfort. This perception is what was communicated to the minority parent. These inadvertant mistakes add to perceptions of difference as difficulty, color as negative and attention as offensive.[35]

Minority educators agree that strong parental involvement in the child's education is the most powerful reinforcer of positive change in ethnic minority students. It has to be communicated to the child that the parent has good feelings toward school, and that the parent supports the teacher in all of the efforts of school.[36] This requires a plan on the part of educators to systematically involve minority parents in a cooperative effort in behalf of their children. The parents say that they are ready and willing to cooperate.

Statistics on disproportionality have made the need apparent. Roadblocks and problems have been identified. All that remains is the effort.

Families with a disabled child are called special families because their children are usually involved in special education programs in the schools. The problems of these families are many: overprotection of the child, blame and guilt of the parents, conflicts between parents, scapegoating of the child, withdrawal by parents and neglect of the child. Although all of these problems impact upon the handicapped child directly, only some of them are amenable to direct intervention by educators.

The presence of a handicapped or mentally ill child in the household truly makes the family special in that they form especially rigid family systems, either enmeshed or disengaged. Additionally, triangulation among members is common with the handicapped child usually ending-up as the scapegoated victim or boss of the family. Not only are stress factors intense, but they are continual. This causes special families to make long-term coping adjustments in order to maintain family homestasis.

Mandated by law, most special educational programs do an admirable job in involving parents of handicapped students in their individualized education programs (I.E.P.) and their multidisciplinary teams (M.D.T.).[37] While teachers report that these programs provide measureable results in improving the child's condition, counselors complain that they seem to do very little for parents and family. Advocates for counselor involvement have gone so far as to call for establishment of I.E.P.'s for counseling to parallel I.E.P.'s for education. A similar case could be made for establishment of counseling M.D.T.'s to parallel M.D.T.'s for education. Theoretically, teachers, counselors, special education instructors, occupational and physical therapists, school psychologists, administrators and parents form the multidisciplinary team. In reality, what often happens is that professionals talk jargon while parents listen, or are consulted occasionally about some personal aspect of the child's life.[38]

The M.D.T. must be facilitated in a way that deeply involves special parents on the team. First, educators can call team members' attention to their use of jargon consistently while challenging those involved to speak to parents and not at them or over their heads. Second, educators can become more knowledgeable about internal struggles of special families in order to be helpful and supportive to parents. For example, it is known that parents of handicapped and mentally ill children go through a grief syndrome similar to the stages of dying experienced in bereavement. Bereavement itself means to rob or rip-off, and parents and families of handicapped or mentally ill children (at times) do feel that they have been robbed. When this occurs, parents feel denial, depression, anger and finally guilt that they are in some way responsible for their child's condition.[39] The result of this syndrome is twofold, either a parent will overidentify with the condition and thus become enmeshed and overprotective of the child, or, a parent will disengage from the situation and neglect the child as a form of underidentification.

Oftentimes, special parents are in conflict themselves over care and management of the child especially when one parent is deeply invested in the child while the other is divesting attention. In this case, the child is either scapegoated or involved in a power alliance with one parent against the other. Poor self-image, self-doubt, fear and anger are symptoms of the child when these conditions are present, while frustration, criticism, victimization and blaming are the parents' symptoms.

What should educators do in this case? How far should one go? The rule of thumb is, "As much as the team is allowed". If the team is interested in helping parents and family as much as providing services for the child, then they will hear cries for help. As much as the team demonstrates its willingness to listen to parents and families, then they will hear intimate concerns of the family. What may then be required is just to listen. At other times, an understanding of grief and its consequences of overidentification may be needed. In extreme cases of conflict or crisis, referral to private counseling or agency sources may be in order.

When there is a gifted child present in a household the family deserves as much attention as those cited above. To be sure, the problems of the child may be certainly different, polar opposites in some cases, but the effect upon family and child are similar. Parents of gifted children are vulnerable to the same two problems as those which plague special parents: overidentification and underidentification.

Parents who demonstrate these characteristics are called overconcerned parents and unaware parents.[40] Those parents who feel insecure about their own educational level and social status have a tendency to ignore unusual accomplishments of their children. Anticipating public exposure as well as expected parenting responsibilities with a gifted child, unaware parents will just as soon avoid exceptional characteristics demonstrated by their children. It is here that teachers, counselors and administrators have been useful in aiding in identification and support of gifted students.

Similar to the special child, a multidisciplinary team (M.D.T.) designed to address social and behavioral concerns of a gifted child and family is required. Educators may play the role of facilitator in a support team for parents and families of gifted children by limiting unnecessary jargon and specialist' terminology in conferences. Teachers and counselors are in a unique position to make sure that specialists talk to parents and not at them or over their heads.

In order to be helpful with families of gifted children, educators must be aware of their unique interpersonal and social problems. These problems have been identified in four major areas: a) parental expectations, b) sibling competition, c) peer-group conformity, and d) discipline of the gifted child.[41] Many parents of gifted children forget that their child is a kid first and gifted second. Because of this they often have high expectations for the child in all areas of the child's life instead of the particular area of exceptionality. These parents overidentify with the gifted child, and thus become overconcerned with the child's progres while feeling responsible for the child's development. Good intentions notwithstanding, overconcern and hyperresponsibility causes more problems than solutions. Not only does an overconcerned parent present a roadblock to a systematic, orderly development for a gifted child, but their attitudes and behaviors smother the child's development and create discipline problems.

Knowledgeable and concerned educators can be helpful by informing parents of this dilemma, which quite simply put is, "The more you (parent) push, the worse it (gifted child) gets". Rather than continuing to control the child by isolated methods, parents may find the team approach helpful. An M.D.T. utilizes information on the child's responsive characteristics from the classroom teacher and discipline and counseling tactics from the school counselor. Professional input from administrators, psychologists and gifted

specialists may also be useful to parents.

In addition to problems of parent attitude and discipline, there are the problems of sibling competition and peer group conformity. Findings reveal that trouble in the sibling subsystem of gifted households arise when: a) other children are compared to the gifted child, b) another talented or bright child in the family is overlooked, c) there is intense competition between gifted siblings. The resultant symptom of each of these situations is jealousy. This is an area where parents and educators are helpful because children respond as much to the intervention of an adult as to interactions with another child. With this in mind parents are warned against verbal comparisons which set-up the "Good-child, Bad-child" game, a game which occurs whenever one child competes with another for adult recognition. This game may be avoided by parents' careful balance of positive recognition to all children in the household, private criticism with individual children, and a constant restraint from any form of comparison between the children. Both parents and educators have found these to be useful tools in defusing intense sibling rivalry.

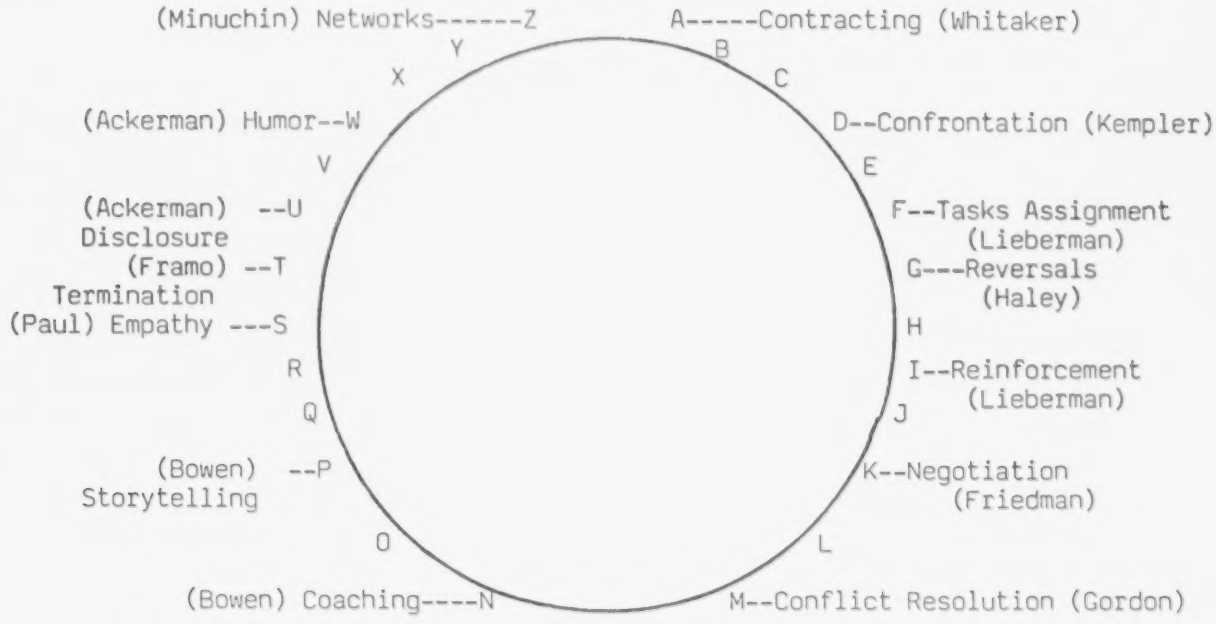
Gifted children also become victims of peer group pressure. On the one hand, a gifted child may become overimpressed with his/her exceptionality. As the human ego attempts to handle parental expectation, public pressures, and individual imaginings, the personality of the child may become enamored with itself and thus fall prey to glamour. This is fatal to that child's peer group relationships. As one gifted student said, "People who make perfect grades are wierd and stuck-up, other kids don't like them very much." When this occurs, the gifted child is confronted with several options: bow to peer pressure and underachieve, conform to average norm of the class, or continue to highly achieve facing the eventual difficulties of estrangement and isolation.[42]

Educators may be of assistance by first, informing the parents of the dilemma and its options. While parental understanding and support is surely needed at this time, what is additionally needed is peer identification and support. This could be facilitated through counseling groups for gifted children held at school or in the community. It would be appropriate for counselors to initiate these groups, but then to allow them to be run by the students themselves for as long as is needed.

FAMILY THERAPIES

Recently, American family therapy has grown to the point where techniques and approaches literally range from A to Z. In 1970, the Committee on the Family of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry surveyed over 300 family therapists in order to identify what particular modes of counseling and therapy were used with families. Respondents were categorized on scale from A to Z. A-type therapists were those whose approach was more individualistic while those therapists who had adopted the new systemic paradigm were categorized as Z-type therapists.[43] For example, the A-type family therapist perceived family problems as the result of individual difficulties; therefore, family counseling was a means to facilitate personal growth and/or individual psychotherapy. On the other hand, Z-type therapists saw family problems as a result of relationship difficulties, and thus, family counseling

was a way of correcting disorderly and unhealthy relationships in the family rather correcting individual problems. These divisions and some of their variations have been illustrated in the following diagram:[44]



(FIG. 7)

Of this seemingly endless variety of approaches, four have been selected for use in schools as strategies for family counseling and involvement. They are the Family Systems Approach, Family of Origin Therapy. Humanistic Family Counseling and Behavioral Family Therapy.

Family System Therapy, the work of Dr. Murray Bowen, was selected for its emphasis on family interactions, triangles within the family, emotional attachment and detachment, and finally the family projection process. This approach stresses the importance of psychological and emotional bonding between family members which results in loss of individual identity. This has been described as togetherness which defines a situation where family members sacrifice a major portion of their individuality or "I-ness" in order to become part of the whole or "We-ness" of the family. Too much "We-ness" occurs particularly within enmeshed families.

When this extreme togetherness is kept to a minimum in families then individual members are said to be differentiated (from the whole). This means that each person takes responsibility for his/her actions, has beliefs which are based on fact and experience rather than on family pressure, and is able to function rationally in times of stress.[45] Differentiation may be lost by a variety of factors within a family, not the least of which is the power of triangles. As was mentioned above, a triangle in a family describes a situation of two-against-one rather than a three-person triad. When there is stress in a family from illness, hardship, separation, etc., the dyad of parents or siblings, unable to cope with the pressures of the situation will

usually triangulate a third party in to lower pressures and minimize anxieties. When a school-aged child is triangulated, the intense involvement with an adult hinders that child's normal process of differentiation. This approach discourages triangulation and attempts to expose and defuse it whenever possible.

Another condition which can hinder differentiation is the problem of emotional attachment within the family. In most families individual members are extremely vulnerable to emotional attachment, the capacity of one member to cling to and feel responsible for emotions of another. For a wide variety of reasons family members believe that they can cause or change the emotional state of others in the family. Addressed under the counseling issue of "Magical-thinking", this belief presents a constant threat to differentiation in children because they cannot distinguish their own feelings from those of their parents.

The child who has the greatest amount of emotional attachment in a family is the one who receives the family projection process. This occurs when parents without awareness transmit to children their tendencies, unwanted habits, or problems they haven't solved for themselves. Because of the bonding nature of attachment children become "snake-bit" with their parents' worst characteristics. Children who are less attached emotionally are less vulnerable to family projection. They may have experienced, or may be heading toward, an emotional cutoff. This is a developmental phase of independence when children experience individual autonomy within families for the first time. The successful facilitation of this phase of autonomy and differentiation is the ultimate goal of Bowen's approach.

The school adaptation of Family Systems Therapy is threefold: a) classroom activities, b) group counseling and c) parent conferences. Teachers may be involved positively in a child's differentiation through classroom assignments which focus upon learning about the child's family. Research on the family tree, interviewing parents and grandparents, inquiry into family life at the birth of each sibling gives the child the opportunity to see himself as part of the whole and not all of it.

Counselors may be involved in a child's differentiation through counseling groups. Group members may be given assignments to establish one-to-one relationships with members of the family and share the results of those relationships with the group. One-to-one relationships at home facilitate individualization and differentiation. Instead of only being, "One of the kids", or "A member of the _____ family", the child may begin to internalize the perception, "I am somebody".[46]

Finally, teachers and counselors may be directly involved in a family's differentiation process through parent conferences. When educators use parent conferences as a part of Family Systems Counseling the entire family of the child is invited in. While it is not mandatory that everyone attend the conference, the more present the greater the understanding of the family as a system. Members are asked two questions designed to expose degrees of togetherness or differentiation: a) What is your view of the problem that we are dealing with today?, and b) What, if any, is the impact of this problem upon the family as a whole? Responses to these questions by members of the family will reveal each member's degree of separateness or attachment to the concept of family. If there are emotional attachments between members these reactions

will come out as members voice their own opinions on the problem. If parents have projected their own unresolved conflicts onto a child they will reveal a sense of ownership of the problem behavior being manifested by the child. Simply by exposing these attachments and encouraging self-responsibility, educators can be helpful in building positive differentiation within a family.

In order to illustrate the four approaches selected for review, the Moore family was interviewed using each approach. This local family was a dual-career family with two school-aged children and a visiting grandparent. The family members were the father, Tim, a local architect; the mother, Coreen, a teacher of adult evening classes; Kathy, an eighteen year-old high school senior; Mike a sixteen year-old sophomore in high school; and Esther Aiken, a sixty five year-old maternal grandmother. Mike has had a reputation for being a non-conformist in school, a moderate rulebreaker who was reported to his counselor, Bob Foster, for repeatedly breaking school rules. While all names have been changed to protect confidentiality, the dialogue went as follows using Family Systems Counseling:

BOB: Mrs. Moore, this is Bob Foster, Mike's counselor at school, I was his teacher in Junior High. Mike was discovered drinking beer in his car at the football game Thursday night. This is not Mike's first violation. As you know he has been given several pink slips for breaking school rules this year. Has Mike told you about this one?

COREEN: Yes...He did. Is he in trouble?

BOB: Well, it is fairly serious. The school has a policy that whenever a student repeatedly breaks the rules, he is turned over to a counselor and his family is asked to come in for conference. Do you think you can get the whole family to come to school to talk with me about Mike's problem situation?

COREEN: Yes! I'll make sure they're all there. We need help with Mike. When do you want us there?

(THREE DAYS LATER)

BOB: Well, Mr. and Mrs. Moore, welcome and thank you for coming. Please come in. Find a seat. Hi, Mike! Hi, Kathy! Come in..... Well, let me begin by thanking you all again for coming in. I hope that the meeting will be productive, and that we can get finished so that everyone can get back to what we were doing. So, why you are here is that the school believes that if a child continues to repeat the same misbehavior or have similar problems, it is useless to continue to discipline the child at school alone. Therefore, the family is called in to help solve the problem. Okay?

Now, I'd like to do this by asking you to respond to two questions separately. First, in your opinion, what do you see as the problem we are dealing with here today? Mrs. Moore, you look like you're ready to start!

COREEN: Yes...I think Mike's problem is that he's rebellious. He's a non-conformist, and he gets caught and brings pink slips home all the time.

BOB: And how do you feel about Mike's bringing home pink slips?

COREEN: Well, when he comes home with a pink slip I talk to him about it because I understand...I used to get them in school, too. You see, Mike doesn't think he's done anything wrong. And if he hasn't hurt anyone else, I agree with him.

BOB: Oh, I see...If Mike doesn't harm another person, then you think that he shouldn't get a pink slip. It seems like physical harm is the cut-off point for you. Is that right?

COREEN: That's right. If Mike hurts someone else, that's a real wrong. But these other rules are not all that important except that then he gets pink slips and has poor grades. Mike's not doing very well at school.

BOB: Mr. Moore, do you agree here? What do you think is the problem?

TIM: Well, I think Mike should follow the rules.

BOB: And how do you feel about Mike's getting in trouble...his breaking the rules?

TIM: Well, when he breaks the rules and gets in trouble, that makes it hard for me.

BOB: Hmmmmmmm...hard for you. How so, Tim?

TIM: Well, Mike is an athlete. He plays hocky on my team. I'm his coach, too. So when Mike gets in trouble, it looks bad for the whole team. If he gets in trouble for drinking, for example, and that gets in the newspaper, then that really looks bad for Mike, me, and the whole team. This won't get in the paper, will it; after all he is under-aged, you know?

BOB: No, as we agreed, this situation stays within school walls. Tell me, Mike, how do you feel about what you've heard so far?

MIKE: Yeah...Well, I don't like to hurt my dad or the team. I don't want to cause anybody trouble. I especially don't like it when mom and dad fight over my hockey.

BOB: Kathy, what do you see as the problem? Why are you here?

KATHY: I see the problem as Mike's acting up. It's his problem...I don't know why I'm here. I'm really tired of having to deal with Mike's problems.

BOB: Okay, Kathy, let me begin the second question with you then. What do you think is the impact of this problem on the whole family?

KATHY: Well, I don't like it when mom and dad fight. They fight over Mike's pink slips when he gets in trouble. They fight over his hockey. I don't like that!

BOB: Hmmm... Okay, Kathy. Mrs. Moore, what do you think is the impact on the family?

COREEN: His father and I do fight about Mike's hockey time, a lot. He's gone playing hockey with his dad all the time. There's no time left for the family, chores around the house, now school. If he had more time from hockey, he wouldn't have all these problems.

BOB: And you, Mr. Moore.... What do you see as the impact on the family?

TIM: Sure, we wouldn't be here today if Mike hadn't got a pink slip.

BOB: You feel punished by being called in here today?

TIM: Yeah.... We wouldn't have to if he would follow the rules. No, I don't like to have to come in to school.

BOB: Well, Coreen, that leaves you. I'm the one who called you and requested the family to come in. You got them here. How do you feel about being here?

COREEN: I'm glad we're here. We need help. Mike needs help. I'm tired of fighting about hockey, about school, about pink slips. We need help!

BOB: Well Mike, what do you think about all of this?

MIKE: I'm really confused. The more I do, the more trouble I get into. If I play hockey, my mom gets mad at me. If I skip hockey and stay home my dad gets mad at me.

BOB: And when you break the rules...

MIKE: You get mad at me.

BOB: Okay, let's take a break everyone. Mike and Kathy, would you leave for a few minutes. I'd like to talk to your mom and dad, alone. Come back in about 15 minutes, okay?

At this point it was appropriate for the counselor to terminate this first phase of F.S.T. Counseling. The session had reached the point where the family problem had begun to manifest through the children. Here the counselor is able to raise the following choices with Mr. and Mrs. Moore: 1) Work out a reasonable time management program for their son, Mike; 2) Seek counseling help for themselves in order to pull together their split on values and priorities regarding hockey time versus family time; 3) Continue with a series of counseling sessions with the counselor or with group counseling involving other families with similar problems. As far as the effectiveness of F.S.T. in this session, it seemed to go only moderately well at best. The interview was able to get beyond the surface and reveal some of the deeper problems existing within the family which probably reinforce Mike's behavior.

Rather than being totally enmeshed or disengaged, the Moore family was split on three important issues: a) Whether or not rules should be followed, b) Family time versus outside activities, c) Family support on aiding Mike to solve his problems. Some of these problems could be resolved at school through more parent conferences or family group counseling; however, the major splits between Mr. and Mrs. Moore will probably need to be referred to an outside marital counselor. When Mike is perceived as the problem is a good example of a child who is a "scapegoat" of the family.

Family of Origin Therapy is the work of Dr. James L. Framo. It was selected for its emphasis on family systems, attention to emotional attachment and liberation of the scapegoated child. This approach emphasizes the importance of relationships as the building blocks of a child's character. In this view a child perceives parents as objects in life which are collected in a child's memory box in the following way: good objects (ie, positive relations with parents) are remembered as pleasant memories, while bad objects (ie, negative relations with parents) are remembered as distress and anxiety. As a result of these positive and negative memories each child matures with an image of the world and expectations of others based on the child's unique, inner viewpoints.

For example, many adults wonder why they act just like their parents sometimes mimicking their worst characteristics. Even against best intentions and sincere effort, they react just like mom or dad in certain situations. In educational circles it has been said that, "Teachers teach like they were taught". A similar argument could be made that, "Parents parent like they were parented". Could this be a key to the unfortunate result of abused children who grow-up to become abusive parents? If it is, the key opens the door to two family problems: emotional attachment and parent-child bonding.[47]

The emotional bonding that exists between parents and children is a biological necessity; however, the bonding contains a double-bind. While bonding is necessary and important for human survival, when held for too long it can be the cause for human suffering. This view suggests that an emotionally attached child yearns for merger with the parent so much that he incorporates the parent as part of his personality. While for most children the process of growing-up includes a quest for independence, for the emotionally attached child separation leads to feelings of loneliness, isolation and depression. If a child is unable to tolerate the necessary separation, he will choose the comfort inherent in bonding. Likewise, in cases where there are negative events in a child's life, negative bonding occurs. This means that a child's need for love is so strong during early developmental stages that he will attach to negative events or persons (eg, abuse and abusive parents) in order to fulfill his needed love objects.

Framo's theory includes three generations in the family because of the importance of grandparents in raising parents and their intimacy with grandchildren. This approach uses school conferences including parents, grandparents, the identified child, other siblings and educators. The goals of this Family of Origin conference is to learn as much as possible about the child's family system (ie, three generations: grandparents, parents, and children). Framo believes that only through a total system examination is one able to determine the factors which influence a child internally as well as externally.[48]

Whether or not a child is emotionally attached to the parents, over-bonded to a particular family member, negatively bonded, or is being scapegoated by the family may be revealed in these Family of Origin conferences. Often internal family problems are buffered by a scapegoated child. This approach attempts to redefine the situation as the family's problem and the child as the bearer of that (family) problem. In so doing, the child in question is liberated from his scapegoat position and becomes an interactive member of a family system that has a problem.

Over the years counselors have facilitated this examination by asking two questions: 1) What do you think that you did which might have contributed to this problem?; 2) What will you do to readjust once this problem has been corrected in your family? Asked of each family member singularly, these questions not only reveal each member's role in creating the problem, but the responses reaffirm that problems are created by the family as a network and are not the fault of one "bad" member, the scapegoat!

For obvious reasons, Framo advises facilitators of these Family of Origin conferences to be gentle with parents and grandparents. Considerable tact and diplomacy is required when investigating sensitive areas of a family's history and tradition. Again, the Moore family interview using Family of Origin Counseling should be of assistance in illustrating this approach. The interview went as follows:

BOB: Mrs. Moore, Bob Foster again from school. You know, Mike's counselor? I wanted to get back to you after our last session a month or so ago.

COREEN: Yes, thanks for calling. Is Mike in trouble again?

BOB: No, nothing reported at this time. But I would like to continue with our talks as a family + school team in Mike's behalf. Do you think that you could round-up the family once again to come-in for conference?

COREEN: Well I don't know. It'll be difficult to get his father in again, and me too. My mother is in town visiting.

BOB: That's great! I'd like to meet your mother. She might be helpful. Please invite her too!

(THREE DAYS LATER)

BOB: Mrs. Moore, welcome and thank you. You were successful. Everybody's here. Mr. Moore, how are you? Hi Mike, Kathy. Mrs. Aiken, how nice of you to come. Everyone, please come in and find a seat.

Let me begin by thanking everybody again for coming today. I hope that by working together as a family + school team, we can not only resolve this problem but help to prevent anymore repeats in the future. Here at school, when we find a student who repeats the same misbehavior several times, we believe that its not enough just to work with the child. We think we'd better call in the family because something is happening (maybe at home or at school) which encourages the student to repeat over and over again. So thanks for helping us out.

To start, let me ask you a couple of questions to try to figure this out. First, I'd like for each of you to think about... What do you think you did (if anything) to contribute to Mike having this problem? You, Mrs. Moore, would you like to respond first?

COREEN: Well, I don't know if this has contributed or not, but I talked to Mike when he came home with the pink-slip, the notice to see you. We usually talk because I understand Mike alot. We're alike. I know how he feels when he gets in trouble and gets a pink-slip. I used to get them in school, too!

ESTHER: Coreen was always a rebel in school. I couldn't get her to do anything right. Her sister was a good child; but Coreen, she was always a free spirit and usually ended-up in trouble.

BOB: Mrs. Aiken, what do you think you might have done to contribute to this problem?

ESTHER: (Pause, then tears) Oh, I've never been a very good grandmother to Mike. And that's not right, I should have been closer to the children as they were growing-up.

BOB: Mr. Moore, Tim, what did you do?

TIM: Well, Mike's not a bad kid. He's just a boy... boys do things like that.

BOB: You sound like you support Mike in that. Do you feel good about Mike's behaviors?

TIM: No! Not at all. I don't like it that Mike gets called in for breaking the rules.

BOB: How do you feel about it? How do you feel about being here today?

TIM: I had to take off from work.

BOB: I understand that, and I thank you for being here today. But what I was wondering was if you felt good about being here, or maybe ashamed of Mike, or disappointed in him? Those kind of feelings.

TIM: I don't like it. I'd rather feel proud of Mike.

BOB: Kathy, you're smiling over there. How do you feel about Mike's behavior?

KATHY: Well I... I don't like it when Mike gets in trouble. I wish he wouldn't. I love my brother, and someday I wish we could double-date together. He's alot of fun, but I won't go out with him as long as he runs around with those guys. They're jerks!

BOB: And Kathy, what do you do that contributes to Mike's problem?

KATHY: I don't do anything. He's a boy, guy's can do anything. Girls can't do nothing.

BOB: And Coreen, how do you respond to that?

COREEN: Well, she's right. At least, that's what her father says.

BOB: Mrs. Moore, what will you do when the family resolves this problem? How will you readjust?

COREEN: Well, I can spend more time with Mike... and talk to him about his day at school... Talk to him about his good days as well as his bad ones.

BOB: Tim, what will you do to readjust?

TIM: I'll feel proud of Mike, like I do when he plays hockey. I'll feel proud of him.

BOB: Mrs. Aiken, Esther, may I call you? What will you do?

ESTHER: (Burst of tears) I feel so bad that I haven't been close to him. I should have been close to Mike and Kathy as they grew-up. Now I don't think that I can help him... I couldn't help Coreen stay out of trouble when she was in school either.

BOB: And Kathy, what about you? How will you readjust when Mike gets it together?

KATHY: (Pause) I will help Mike with his homework so that his grades will get better. Maybe if he could find some decent friends, and pull his grades up, we could do more things together as brother and sister.

BOB: Mrs. Moore?

COREEN: Yes, I will spend more time talking to Mike about how to stay out of trouble, so that he can make it better. I can do that, but can I ask a question?

BOB: Sure, then I want to hear from Mike, okay?

COREEN: What are you going to do? What's the school's part in all of this?

BOB: I like Mike, and I want him to make it here at school. I'm willing to see Mike once (even twice) a week for 30 minutes to counsel with him on following the rules. I was a good kid when I was in school and I can teach him how to do that.

COREEN: Good. (Pause) That's good. I accept that.

BOB: Mike, two questions that I'd like you to respond to after your family... as we agreed. One, what comment surprised you the most? and two, what comment made the greatest impact upon you?

MIKE: Yeah I... I was surprised that grandma feels so guilty about us kids. And, and I... I like it that Kathy feels the way she does. It'll be cool to double-date with her friends.

BOB: Good, let's stop here for now. This is enough. Maybe we can get together again.

This Moore family illustration is an especially good one in that it aptly demonstrates the effects of three-generational attachment from the grandmother to grandson. The session was a good demonstration of positive bonding between siblings which may be the key to this family's problem. And finally, it exposed a potential area of husband-wife dispute regarding a double-standard for boys and girls. This dispute was not exploited because of the inappropriateness of dealing with it in a family conference. Therefore, it was appropriate for Mr. Foster to terminate the conference at this point. The family had reached a point where it was able to help itself, primarily between Kathy and Mike. Because mother and father have their own issues, they may not be of great help to Mike. But, the combination of school counseling, positive sibling bonding and nurturance from his mother might aid Mike presently, as well as in the future.

Humanistic Family Therapy is the work of Dr. Virginia Satir. It was selected because of its optimistic and positive view of families and family counseling. Satir has stated, "We (family therapists) believe that all people, given the tools, not only want to, but will learn and change. Our job (as family therapists) is to make these skills accessible and useful for them."[49] In order for professional educators to assist family therapists in accomplishing this goal, educators must assume the following functions: teacher of effective communication, facilitator of the counseling process, impartial observer and resource person.

Although Satir's approach is more individualistic in style than the systemic approaches of Bowen and Framo, there are segments of the theory which utilize systemic concepts and principles. First, there is the concept of family as a system although a family member may be singled-out as an identified client. Secondly, the relationship between parents and school-aged children is emphasized. Finally, interlocking effects of various communications in the family is examined. With these objectives in mind, Satir's approach proceeds in a positive and nurturing manner toward goals of personal growth, improvement of communication and building a family support system.

According this approach families seek assistance from public helpers (ie, teachers, counselors, etc.) or private sources (ie, family therapists) when certain problems are being experienced by a member of the family. By this time most families have made several attempts to solve the problem or at least cope with it. Usually, the presenting problem has been precipitated and/or preceeded by an event which requires a change in the family. While the person experiencing the brunt of the problem (eg, a school-aged child) is identified, that child is not seen as "sick" but as a catalyst

for change in the family. Other members of the family are encouraged to rally around that member as a support system. This is positive in a family system because it encourages each member to view himself as part of a team effort to turn a problem into a solution.

As is often the case in these conferences, the entire family or at least the parents of the identified child are invited in. Each person is asked to give their opinion of, "What is the problem?" This establishes the framework that each member will be perceived as an individual human being, capable of having opinions and making judgments about the situation.

Following this members are asked to, "Think of any events around the beginning of the problem which may have helped to cause it?" Each member is again encouraged to speak as an individual in this analysis as their part in helping to resolve the problem. One goal of this review is to expose any catalytic or precipitating events of the problem situation. Another goal is to indicate to members of the family that their family as a system is influenced by external events impacting upon them as much as internal forces.

Responses to these inquiries often reflect two additional problems which may be hidden within the family's communication system: a) double-binding messages, b) dysfunctional interpersonal communication within the family. Satir views a double-bind communication as a frequent reinforcer of problems of children in families.[50] Particularly when children are emotionally attached or bonded to adults in the family they are extremely vulnerable to conflicting messages which say two things at once. Mostly, these messages confer one set of communications verbally with an equal-and-opposing set of communications nonverbally. The child then feels, "Damned if he does (believe the message), and damned if he doesn't (believe the message)". Confronted with this paradox, most children react with acting-out behaviors, rebellion, withdrawal, depression, etc.

Secondly, with respect to certain dysfunctional communication in the family, Satir has described five styles of interpersonal communication, four of which are viewed as dysfunctional. They are:

1. Placating -- when the person views him/herself so negatively as to constantly agree with others in the family;
2. Blaming -- this person dominates others in the family with his/her criticisms and judgments;
3. Super-reasonable -- this person is too rational and logical, ignoring his own feelings and the feelings of others;
4. Irrelevant -- this person's communications are distracting and usually does not relate to what is going on;
5. Congruent -- the only functional form of communication which takes account of oneself, others and the relationship.

Various combinations of these styles are found in families and may be revealed in these family conferences.[51]

For educators using this approach, the task would be to identify any of these dysfunctional styles and steer them toward more congruent forms. This facilitation is not accomplished by singling-out a family member as blamer, placeter, etc. It is accomplished by mentally identifying the

style, internally analyzing and correcting it, then specifically asking the family member for clarification in a way that steers him toward a more congruent response. For example, in the previous interview when the father was asked how he felt about being at a school conference regarding his son's behavior, he responded, "I had to skip work today". This response was both super-reasonable (unemotional) and irrelevant (didn't answer the question). A humanistic teacher, counselor or administrator might respond with, "Yes, I understand Mr. Moore, but what I was thinking about was more personal feelings like anger at being called in to school, disappointment about Mike, glad to be asked to help... feelings like that." In this way, humanistic educators facilitate honest and direct interactions between family members in ways that are non-threatening and nurturing rather than critical or judgmental.

Humanistic Family Therapy was the third approach used with the Moore Family. Approximately three weeks had elapsed since the last session, and the interview went as follows:

BOB: Mrs. Moore, this is Bob Foster from the school. I thought I'd give you a call to check-in on how you're doing.

COREEN: Well, we're doing just fine. Things are going better here at home. Everyone is really trying to communicate, and making a real effort to help each other do better. My mother even called to talk to Mike and see how he was doing.

BOB: That's great! And speaking of Mike, he hasn't gotten a pink slip since the first time the family met in conference. I think that's great. He's really improved here at school.

But I still wanted to call on you for another session. The principal has asked me not to drop the ball on this, but to keep contact with you guys to keep-up the momentum. I would like to invite you in for another conference. And if it is okay with you, I'd like for only you, Kathy and Mike to come-in this time. I know Mr. Moore has a difficult time leaving his work. Would you be willing to meet with Kathy and Mike here at school?

COREEN: Yes. That will be fine. I don't see a problem if we can meet around Kathy's other school activities.

(THREE DAYS LATER)

BOB: Hello everybody. Please come-in. Mrs. Moore, how are you? Hi Mike! Hi Kathy!

I want to thank you all again for coming in. This is our third session in two months. And Mrs. Moore, you said that things were going better at home... not perfect, but better.

COREEN: Yes, things are going better (Smile). And it feels really good to come in here again. I feel like we're moving, like we're going somewhere as a family. These sessions have been very helpful.

BOB: How so? What have you noticed that's different at home?

COREEN: Well, Mike hasn't gotten anymore pink slips. So his father and I haven't had to fight about that. And... everybody's trying at home. I mean Mike, he's doing more chores around the house. And Kathy helps him with his homework now. And even his father watches his watch so that they don't leave one minute earlier than necessary for hockey. Things like that (Smile)!

BOB: Yes, and as I said... Mike, you haven't gotten anymore pink slips. How do you feel about that?

MIKE: Uh--Huh.

BOB: And Kathy, you said last session that you would like to double date with Mike. Has that happened yet?

KATHY: No, not yet. I've got a neat girlfriend who likes Mike. And he says he likes her, too. But we haven't gone out together yet, maybe soon.

BOB: We're off to a good start. On a positive note.

What I would like to do today is a bit different than what we've done before. Instead of looking at everything as a family, today I'd like you to look at what we talk about as separate individuals... as you really are. Try to respond not as a member of the Moore family, but as an individual human being, able to think and answer for himself. Okay?

Now, like before I want to ask you to respond to a couple of questions to get the conversation rolling. And remember now, think and answer for yourselves. First, in your opinion what do you think is the problem that still exists in your family. We have been working together for two months and alot has happened. You said that there have been changes at home and certainly there have been changes here at school. Think about all of that and then ask yourselves, what still remains as the problem to be solved?

KATHY: Well, when I was in literature class the other day we were studying about charisma. And I thought, that's what Mike has... Charisma. When he talks about things he did, we all love him and we believe him when he says that what he did was not all that bad. Then, when I walk away I realize that he was doing bad stuff. That he was wrong. But when he was telling us and making us laugh, it seemed alright. It didn't seem all that bad, you know?

BOB: I see. And when I hear you say that we all love him, I assume you're in there, too. Right? You really love your brother.

KATHY: Uh--Huh. Yeah, I do love him.

BOB: Okay, Mrs. Moore, what do you still see as the problem?

COREEN: Well, I see it differently. The problem that I see is that Mike is a follower. He agrees with everybody at home. And he also keeps everybody happy, too.

BOB: Hmmmm... and how is that a problem?

COREEN: Well, he doesn't do anything. No, I don't mean that. He does what he's told. I mean he doesn't initiate anything on his own. Like everybody's trying to change, really working hard. But with Mike, it looks so easy. He just hangs around until you tell him what to do. That's what I mean when I say he's a follower. And that scares me...

BOB: Oh, I see... You mean that since Mike is a follower, then he might follow anyone: Good or bad. It just so happens that right now, he's following you and the family and is doing the right things. Is that what you're saying?

COREEN: Yes. And that worries me.

BOB: Okay Mike, and again thank you for letting your family speak first as we agreed. But now it's your turn. How do you see all of this. What's the problem to you?

MIKE: Well, I don't get to hang-out no more with my friends. I have to go home, study, eat, and go to hockey.

BOB: Hmmmm.... Mike, your sister and mother see the situation quite differently... almost opposite, you know. On the one hand, Kathy sees you as charismatic, really impressing her and the family. While on the other hand, your mom sees you as a follower, someone who is easily impressed by others. Now to me, that's a double-message. And double messages are usually confusing. How does a guy handle that? How do you see that?

MIKE: Sometimes when things get serious, I know how to make-em funny. If I can make people laugh, then I won't get in so much trouble. Then when it gets serious again, I don't say nothing. I just do what they tell me.

BOB: And how do you think that confuses your sister?

MIKE: She can't tell when I'm going to be funny or quiet.

BOB: And your mother?

MIKE: She can't tell what I'm going to do.

BOB: And you Mike, is it confusing to you being two people?

MIKE: Only when it gets serious for a long time. Then that gets a little scary. But mostly I can handle it.

BOB: Okay. Good start. Now, the second question. Think about what was happening in your lives just before all of this started. Think back two months ago. What was going on then that might have helped to trigger this problem? Does everybody know what trigger means?

COREEN: Yes, I do. Trigger means to turn-on the problem. To get it started.

(PAUSE)

That was when I had to go to Alaska to teach a class. You know I usually teach at night, but that class was in Homer, Alaska, and I had to be gone for a week. I had to leave chores for everyone, and I left my car with Mike. And while I was gone, something happened. That was two months ago.

KATHY: Yeah... I remember. Mike took mom's car to a party, and the party got wild. That neighbor lady called and said that she was going to call the police. Mike got scared and tried to take mom's car home. The policeman came and stopped Mike from leaving. Then he told him to go back to the party. That cop busted all those guys at the party, then they towed mom's car away. It got messed-up in the towing... Oh yeah, Mike's girlfriend walked-out on him, too! She thought he was dumb to try to leave the party, so she walked-out on him.

BOB: Wow! All of this happened in one night Mike?

MIKE: Yeah... They busted us and then let us go. But they towed my mom's car away and it got bent-up in the towing. I had to borrow $150 from my dad to get it out, and get it fixed before my mom got back. I didn't want her to see the car all banged up. I still owe my dad for that money.

BOB: Must be tough on a guy. Owing your dad all that money for two months. Do you work Mike? Have you been paying on it?

MIKE: Yeah, I work. But I haven't been paying on it.

BOB: Well, maybe in our next session we can work on a plan to help you pay back your dad... to get that pressure off your back. Would you like that Mike?

MIKE: Yeah! He reminds me everyday that I owe him.

BOB: Okay then let's stop here for today. Thanks for coming in.

Although this interview was quite different from the previous two which focused on the family systems network, it revealed a considerable amount of family information in conjunction with the individual viewpoints. The readiness of the family to cooperate and participate was clear in this session. Also, a prevailing positive attitude towards growth and change was evident. Surprisingly, a double-bind was revealed in the discussion although it appeared to exert only a mild effect upon Mike, the identified counselee. The responses at the end of the session regarding precipitative events were quite revealing. The family seemed to perceive a direct cause-and-effect relationship between those events and the subsequent problematic period. Not only was Coreen drawn away from the family for a significant period of time, but during

her absence Mike experienced a series of traumatic events: a) getting busted at a wild party, b) having Coreen's car towed away while under his responsibility, c) having the car damaged during the towing, d) having his date rebuke him publicly and walk-out on him, and e) finally having to borrow a substantial sum of money from his father in order to secure the car before Coreen's return. Some, if not all, of these events may have had a deleterious effect on Mike. Although it cannot be affirmed that they caused Mike's misbehavior, for a student who has already demonstrated chronicity events like these could easily precipitate a reoccurence and throw Mike off-balance. The session closed with a potential issue for the next session: Mike's repayment of the loan from his father.

Because of the proliferation of behavioral therapists, it is difficult to award credit for this approach to any one individual. However, in order to preserve a continuity of style the Behavioral Family Therapy (called B.F.T.) of Dr. Robert Lieberman was selected. B.F.T. is an attempt to integrate elements of classical learning theory into new paradigms of family as a social system. Considering family members on all three levels of human functioning (ie, thinking, feeling and acting), B.F.T. provides a social-learning theory which differs from the classical or operant/conditioning views of past years.

For example, when B.F.T. counselors consider the role of cognition in influencing a child's behavior, they focus their attention on faulty thought patterns being used by the child. These are negative, self-defeating and put-down thoughts like, "I'm just no good", "I'll never make it", "I can't do anything right". This view suggests that thoughts like these trigger and condition negative behavior just as much as external reinforcers. Similarly, counselors consider the role of affect in influencing a child's behavior patterns. When a child's actions are received and responded to by intense emotionality, then those emotions reinforce unwanted responses in the child. Finally, B.F.T. counselors consider the role of behaviors in influencing the actions of others. When a family member does something within the family and receives a complementary reaction from another, then he is more likely to repeat that behavior. This is called shaping and is as capable of molding human behavior as earlier methods of classical or operant conditioning.

It has been found that family members also learn from one another through modeling. In many families imitation is a subtle form of flattery and regardless if the imitation is positive or negative, behavioral modeling is a strong teacher and reinforcer of wanted or unwanted behaviors. B.F.T. counselors utilize shaping and modeling to guide families toward more functional interpersonal behaviors.

Lieberman's approach to B.F.T. has two specific goals for family members: 1) What behavior is harmful in the problem-situation?, and 2) What specific changes would be appropriate to resolve the problem? These two goals exemplify B.F.T.'s approach to problem-solving in a family. The inappropriate behavior in the present problem is the problem; therefore,

once those behaviors are identified and corrected the problem is solved. The simplicity and practicality inherent in this concept is what has elevated Lieberman's approach to great popularity in family therapy circles.

Treatment strategies for educators using a B.F.T. approach to family counseling are sequential in that each step is dependent upon completion of the previous one. The steps occur in the following order:

1. Identify the problem -- this occurs when educators inquire into the specific behaviors that are part of the problem;

2. Identify the solution -- these are the specific changes that are desired in a family;

3. Examine the consequences -- this occurs when educators are able to identify all of the complementary or reciprocal reactions within a family;

4. Shaping the environment -- this occurs when educators shape-out harmful reinforcers, while shaping-in behaviors which reinforce wanted behaviors;

5. Modeling wanted behaviors -- this occurs when educators act-out functional behaviors for the family;

6. Behavioral instruction -- this is a discussion between the educator and members of the family which outlines the plan of action, expected results and how to measure the success or failure of a plan.[53]

The fourth interview with the Moore family may be used to illustrate the B.F.T. approach to family counseling. By the time this interview was held, two weeks had elapsed since the last session. The pre-conference discussion and family conference went as follows:

BOB: Mrs. Moore, how are you and the family? How are things going at home?

COREEN: Well, things have leveled-off here. It seems like we've hit a plateau.

BOB: Have you had a chance to talk to either Kathy or Mike about the sessions? I have wondered what the effect has been on their lives with us adults poking around in them. Do you have any feedback from them?

COREEN: Why yes... I talked to both of them about the conferences at school, and they tell me that they have talked to each other about it. (PAUSE) The most interesting thing that Kathy said was that she felt embarrassed to say in public that she loved Mike. She says that it's true that she does love her brother, but she felt funny admitting it to everyone. And I talked to Mike and he said that he also was embarrassed, but more than that, he was ashamed that he hadn't noticed how much his sister cared about him now and even when he was younger in elementary school. So now he's making more of an attempt to be with Kathy, to give her a ride when she needs it... things like that.

BOB: Hmmmm... that's a real change for Mike. And has anymore happened about Mike's loan from his dad? Anything going on there?

COREEN: Well, he's agreed to start paying his dad back. He works as a dishwasher, you know. And he's going to pay his dad $25.00 a month until it is all paid back.

BOB: That's great. Neat to see that happening. Good for Mike. Now, I'd like to meet with you guys one more time if it is convenient for everyone. I know Kathy might have a hard time now that track season has started, but could you ask Mr. Moore if he could join us in conference again?

COREEN: Yes... it'll be really difficult for Kathy right now, but I'll try to get her dad there. When do you want us to come in?

(THREE DAYS LATER)

BOB: Ah... Mr. and Mrs. Moore... welcome. Please come-in. Hi Mike, you too. I'm sorry that Kathy couldn't make it today. I'm sure we'll miss her.

COREEN: Thank you Mr. Foster, it is nice to come back. These sessions have been good for our family. Kathy said to tell you that she was sorry she couldn't make it today. Track season is here, you know. But she said that she would help in any way that she could.

BOB: Well, this is our fourth session in two-and-a-half months, just ten weeks... It seems longer than that, you know. I feel almost like a member of the family... from these sessions, the conferences. I'll be sorry to see them end.

What I'd like to do today is to clean-up whatever loose ends there might be and set a framework for you guys to continue on your own with the good work you've been doing. Okay? What I'd like is for you to think about your family as a whole, and ask yourselves what still remains as a problem? What is still left to be done? What's unfinished...

COREEN: Well, I think we still have a problem of communication in the family. We don't communicate... We talk about superficial things like what to have for dinner, who needs shoes, who's going where. But we don't talk, I mean really talk... about us. That's why I say we don't communicate.

BOB: Well, Mr. Moore, how do you feel about that? Is that a problem for you... communication, I mean?

TIM: I don't see where that's a problem. There's certain things that need to be done... and you just do em. That's all. Talking about things all the time makes a problem, because I always end-up loosing. I always lose... I end-up getting dumped-on all the time. Then I'm the bad guy!

BOB: Mike, how do you feel about that?

MIKE: I don't know what to say most of the time. When we talk, even here, I don't know what to say... so I don't say nothing.

BOB: Tim, if we can set-up a system which would guarantee that you wouldn't be dumped-on, would you feel safer about talking?

TIM: No, I wouldn't. No matter what happened, Coreen would still dump-on me and I would end-up loosing.

BOB: Suppose I suggest that a limited time be made for discussion each week with set times for problems and equal times for solutions. No one-way complaining. There must be equal time for the positive as well as the negative. And, though she's not here today... I think Kathy would be great to monitor that process. What do you think?

COREEN: I think she would be good. Kathy's a smart kid. She's good in school, in track... alot of things. I think she'll be great.

TIM: I don't think so... because I think she will side with her mom and then I'll get it. Naw... it won't work.

BOB: Well Mike, I think we're stuck here. Help us out... think about all the things we've talked about in our private sessions and at these conferences. Tell you dad how you feel about this. Give us your opinion.

MIKE: Dad, I don't think you give Kathy a chance. I don't think that's fair. She deserves a chance...

BOB: Tim, Mike seems to disagree with you on Kathy's chances. What if I gave her strict instructions on timing, even a kitchen timer and notepad. Would you feel protected then?

TIM: No, there's nothing that could happen here that would convince me that she wouldn't side with her mom. Then I'd get it... then I'm the bad guy all over again!

BOB: Mike do you agree, do you think that Kathy would be unfair and side with your mom against you and your dad?

MIKE: Dad, I think you're wrong. Kathy's good in school. She deserves a chance.

TIM: Well, it's not really Kathy that I'm against. I just don't trust what Coreen would say if she got a chance to get at me...

BOB: I hear your concerns... I hear that. That's why I've been trying to set-up a situation where you and everybody would be protected by Kathy's keeping the books on what everyone is saying. But you don't seem to accept that.

(PAUSE)

Mrs. Moore, what do you think... would you feel protected if we could set-up a system like that with Kathy running it?

COREEN: Yes I would. It would be fair for everybody. She'd do it right.

BOB: Mike, how about you? Would Kathy be fair to everybody?

MIKE: Yeah... she's good at that kinda stuff.

BOB: Mr. Moore, what do you think?

TIM: I think you're trying to take my boy from me. We used to be buddies, now he's siding with you... against me.

BOB: Mike, I need your help again. What do you have to say to your dad about how you feel about this Civil War in your family between the men and the women? Would you tell us what you're feeling?

MIKE: (LONG PAUSE) Dad, when we go out to hockey and stuff, you always talk about the women, and what they want so much. You laugh, but I don't think its funny anymore. I think we should give Kathy a chance, and not down her because she's a girl.

BOB: Mrs. Moore, would you feel comfortable with a system of one talk per week, first 10 minutes, then 20, then 30 minutes. Each time it must be cut half-in-half, positive and negative. Each one gets to talk one negative, then one positive. Would that satisfy you?

COREEN: Yes. Anything to get us talking as a family. I think Kathy would be fair. She'd be good!

BOB: And Mr. Moore, what do you think? Everyone seems to want to try it. Would this system satisfy you?

TIM: Well... It probably won't make a difference, but I'll try it.

BOB: Mike, how about you? Do you think it'll be of help?

MIKE: Yeah... I need to learn how to talk. I'm even talking here, and that feels good. I'm anxious to try it. Yeah, it'll be good.

BOB: Okay then, I'll ask Kathy to come-in so that we can talk. I'll give her good instructions, and I think she'll be good at keeping score on whose talking. I have great confidence in her.

Let's stop here then for today. I think you guys are ready to take the reins in your own hands now. It won't be easy. There's still some rough spots, but I think you can do it. However, if things don't go right call me in a couple of months and if need be, come back in and we'll have a session. If you need me, I'll be here for you. Okay???

Although there were several unsettling moments in this session, it was a good place to stop. This conference revealed several things and initiated many others. First of all, this session revealed clearly the cognitive split in the household on the need for

communication. One spouse affirms the need for open communication while the other discounts its importance in favor of day-to-day action. This session also revealed the male-female boundary battle in the Moore family. Although this split was indirectly identified several sessions earlier, it became clear in this session and was discussed openly for the first time. Unexpectedly, this session triggered a confrontation between Mike and his father. This was the first indication of differentiation by Mike. Regardless of the issue, Mike was able to stand-up to his father and speak his mind as an individual person. Finally, this session inaugurated a series of structured discussions in the family which will aid in its process of self-help. It may be possible that both Mr. and Mrs. Moore were correct in their assumptions about each other: a) Mr. Moore would like to avoid any face-to-face encounters in lieu of surface talk, and b) Mrs. Moore would take any given opportunity to be overly critical and judgmental towards him. Given these possibilities, the opportunity to structure a more equitable discussion was worth the chance. Their daughter Kathy was chosen for the task of referee because she seemed to be the least attached, most differentiated and capable person in the Moore family at this time.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the case has been made for improved utilization and involvement of families in the educational careers of their children. Teachers, counselors and administrators have always had some form of contact with parents in the usual ways (eg, school visits, functions, grading conferences, etc.). However, in addition to these opportunities this paper emphasized the importance of parent contact through the use of mechanisms such as parent conferences, family counseling, parent education, and support groups. While Federal Legislation (P.L. 94-142) mandated certain types of parent contact with selected segments of the student body (eg, special and/or exceptional students), this paper reaffirmed the need for increased and improved contact with parents of <u>all</u> students. Within these mechanisms <u>four</u> specific goals were outlined for educators in their work with parents and families: a) providing social and emotional support, b) facilitating an exchange of information, c) assisting in the improvement of parent-child interaction, and d) fostering increased parental participation in schools. The child's educational program effects are likely to be severly limited without parental support. Therefore, school personnel should aggressively seek a strong relationship with parents and families, built upon mutual trust and efforts toward a mutual goal: the best possible education for children.[54]

How to prepare educators for this involvement raises another set of issues:

1. How can schools prepare educators to respond to increasing needs of greater involvement with parents and families?

2. How can schools utilize local resources in Family Counseling to aid families which are in crisis?

3. How can educators be more effective when working with a growing number of non-traditional families?

First, with respect to staff development of teachers and counselors the following recommendations are made. School counselors should form liaison with community family therapists for education, consultation and referral. With this growing need in communities, more and more mental health agencies and private practitioners are focusing upon marital and family counseling as a specialty. Counselors should take advantage of these opportunities to train and consult with family therapists as a part of their professional development.

Once these contacts have been established, then it is recommended that counselors should coordinate staff development seminars, courses, and in-service training for the remainder of the educational staff. Community family therapists should be utilized in this capacity to build a bridge between public education and public mental health services. This linkage is vital to the improvement of education's role with parents and families. Because of the absence of this linkage educators have lacked an understanding of the dynamics of families, and hence, have been reticent to increase their involvement.

Some families are very difficult and to some extent escalate out of the range of normal assistance by educators in schools. However, for these families referral to trusted community resources would be in order. We believe that personal contact with local professionals through the school counselor, consultations, workshops and courses, in-service training and staff development, etc., would enable educators to be confident in referrals to families at times of great need or crisis. Additionally, it is recommended that educators become aware of and in some cases involved in local parent support groups and adult education courses in areas such as, the Tough-Love Programs, Adult Children of Alcoholics, Unwed Mother's Groups, Single-Parents' Alliance, etc. Knowledge of these programs and organizations are helpful to troubled parents and families and should be part of the information-sharing responsibility of educators.

Finally, this paper promised to make specific recommendations on issues of non-traditional families. Although this has been covered in detail in previous sections of the paper, it would be appropriate to close with a summary of those recommendations. Regarding single-parent families in difficulty, their problems will fall in two major areas: reaction to separation and setting-up a new lifestyle. While it is not recommended for educators to be intimately involved in separation difficulties, it would be appropriate to make referrals when requested by the parent.

However, educators can be helpful by assisting the parent in outlining components necessary for setting-up a new lifestyle. The HELPING CHART outlined above would be useful in this area. And last, but not least, educators are cautioned against negative assumptions of "broken home" or "child without a father (or mother)" stereotypes when working with single-parents.

With respect to step-parent families, one of the common mistakes that educators make is treating stepfamilies as if they were biological families. There is a need to respect the time and space needed to blend families. When stepparents are having difficulty with school-aged children is a time for educators to be aware and patient with the family on issues of discipline, expectations of the children and communications within the family.

Being knowledgeable of issues which confront stepfamilies will assist educators to be compassionate listeners to troubled step-parents and/or stepchildren.

When children of dual-employed parent households are having difficulty there is usually a connection between that difficulty and the child's relation to one or both parents. Because of the stigma attached to working parents, educators are often prejudiced against them for rearing neglected or misguided children. Many dual-employed couples compensate for this stereotype by either overprotection or withdrawal from the child. Information sharing on these issues can be helpful to employed parents who are troubled about their parent-child relations. Family conferences, facilitated by aware and concerned educators, may be useful in problem-solving and building rapport between teachers, working parents and their school-aged children.

Educators would be well-advised to realize that many, if not most, minority parents perceive that schools contact them only when their children are in trouble and then only when it is too late to help. Regardless of if this perception is accurate or not, since minority parents believe it there is a cautious attitude toward school personnel and the school system. This gap must be bridged if there is to be a possibility of teamwork between minority parents and the schools. We believe that it is the educator's responsibility to build this bridge between culture and community. The roadblocks are many and this will be a challenge for concerned educators. But those who are committed to change will find that many minority parents are eager to be involved in their child's education.

Years ago public legislation provided the impetus for an increase in parent involvement with handicapped children. Problems basic to these special families fall in two general categories: overidentification or underidentification with the handicapped child. Involvement with these families is bound to change in years to come to a team approach to aid the entire family, as well as the handicapped child. An M.D.T./I.E.P. approach in the area of family counseling has been recommended for educators. This would require an informed staff working with the family in its own interest and that of the child.

Problems of parents of gifted children are similar to those of parents in special families. They were identified as the overconcerned and the unaware parent. In addition to their own attitudes, parents of gifted children must handle interpersonal problems of sibling jealousy, competition and peer-group pressure as potential problem areas. Through the use of parent conferences, counseling groups, etc., educators must take the opportunity to be involved in the growth of these families as well as the personal development of the gifted child.

We would amiss to end this writing without mentioning something about abuse in families. Although this paper has not covered abuse as a topic area, this is not to ignore the importance of physical and psychological abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse, teenage suicide and family violence. It was decided that although these abuses do occur in the families of school-aged children, the subject area was too important and the material too exhaustive to cover in a paper of this length. We believe that the subject of abuse deserves separate and distinct coverage, and we encourage educators to be involved in exposing its problems and solutions to the general public.

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